

General FAQ - LEED® for Homes



What is USGBC?

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a nonprofit organization committed to expanding sustainable building practices. USGBC is composed of more than 20,000 organizations from across the building industry that is working to make green buildings available to everyone. Members include building owners and end-users, real estate developers, facility managers, architects, designers, engineers, general contractors, subcontractors, product and building system manufacturers, government agencies, and nonprofits.

What is LEED® and LEED® for Homes?

LEED is a national third-party certification system that recognizes leadership in green building. It is developed by a consensus process of volunteer members of the U.S. Green Building Council who contribute their expertise to its technical development. LEED was first introduced in March 2000 for new commercial construction and has since grown to include specialized versions for homes, neighborhood development, commercial interiors, high performance building operations and maintenance, and core and shell development. More than 3.2 billion square feet of real estate in the United States and 60 other countries have been certified or are pursuing LEED certification.

LEED for Homes, which launched in January 2008, measures green home building performance based on eight categories: innovation & design, location & linkages, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy & atmosphere, materials & resources, indoor environmental quality, and awareness & education. Within each of these areas, projects earn points toward certification. LEED has four levels of certification: Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum, with Platinum representing the highest level of achievement.

What is Earth Advantage Institute?

Earth Advantage Institute is a LEED for Homes Provider. Earth Advantage Institute is a nonprofit organization that has been recognized by the USGBC as possessing experience and expertise in the green building market. Earth Advantage Institute is here to support you, your architect, and your builder during your building process by providing guidance, documentation and verification services, and communication with the USGBC to ensure a smooth certification for your home(s).

What is a green home and is it right for me?

Compared to a conventional home, a green home uses less energy, water, and natural resources; creates less waste; is smartly located and built with as little impact as possible on the land it sits on; and is healthier for the people living inside. Green homes are designed to reduce carbon and environmental impact. If you would like a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle for you and for your family, a green home is right for you. Green homes have lower utility bills, use less water, are associated with fewer asthma attacks, and are at lower risk for mold and mildew. Green homes are affordable, better for the environment, and better for you.

Why should I build a LEED home?

LEED has become recognized in the commercial building sector as the national benchmark of performance for green buildings and has rapidly gained recognition among the public at large. LEED for Homes is designed to serve the residential construction industry. Home builders using LEED will be able to differentiate their homes as representing the highest performing homes on the market. Furthermore, LEED certification will make it easy for homebuyers to readily identify high-quality green homes. LEED-certified homes are built with efficiency and health in mind. Based on Home Energy Rating System (HERS®) index score tests performed on homes certified, the average LEED certified home is predicted to have energy savings of between 30%-60% over homes built to International Energy Conservation Code, a widely used standard.

Do LEED-certified homes cost more?

LEED certification can fit into any family's budget. LEED certified homes include everything from luxury residences to Habitat for Humanity projects. Buying green and asking for LEED-certification is your choice.

How can I participate in LEED for Homes?

Builders, designers, and other professionals interested in registering a project with LEED for Homes should contact Earth Advantage Institute, your local LEED for Homes provider. Homeowners interested in buying or building a LEED home should discuss LEED with their builder, designer, or real estate professional. More information is available at www.thegreenhomeguide.org. The information located at www.usgbc.org/buildleedhomes can also help you and your housing professional begin your discussion.

Where can I get a LEED for Homes checklist, Rating System (manual), and see examples of certified projects?

The Rating System and National Checklists are available on USGBC's Web site at www.greenhomeguide.org or www.usgbc.org. USGBC posts a list of certified projects online: www.usgbc.org/homes

Where can I find out more about green home building?

Visit USGBC's Green Home Guide Web site for resources on green homebuilding for consumers: www.thegreenhomeguide.org.

Builders and other professionals can find resources at www.usgbc.org/buildleedhomes USGBC offers a diverse range of educational opportunities, including webinars and workshops led by USGBC's highly trained and experienced faculty. To get connected with fellow green building professionals locally, you can join the Cascadia chapter at www.usgbc.org/chapters.

Do I have to be a member of USGBC to participate in LEED for Homes?

No. However, you are welcome to become a USGBC member at the national or local level. National membership is intended for organizations, chapter memberships are for individuals. Please visit the www.usgbc.org for details.

What is the difference between LEED for Homes and other green home programs?

LEED is a national third-party certification system for green homebuilding. It is designed to recognize leadership, so the program is rigorous and focused on measurable results. LEED for Homes certification is something that consumers can look for nationwide to readily identify

green homes that have been third-party verified, performance tested, and certified to perform better than conventional homes.

There are also more than 80 highly regarded local or regional green home building programs in the United States. Each of these programs is unique, with its own specifications and requirements. By reviewing the checklists for LEED and other available local or regional programs, you can choose the rating system that works best for your goals.

What types of homes can use the LEED rating system?

The LEED for Homes rating system is intended for single-family, multifamily, mid-rise (under 6 stories), manufactured, and modular homes, as well as assisted care facilities and dormitories. Please contact Earth Advantage Institute to determine whether your project is suitable for LEED for Homes certification.

Will LEED include home renovations?

LEED for Homes is focused on the construction of new homes. Existing homes that are undergoing full gut rehabs (down to the studs on at least one side of each exterior wall) are eligible to participate in the program. For lesser remodeling projects, the USGBC and the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) have partnered to create REGREEN®. Unlike LEED for Homes, REGREEN is not a certification system but a guideline to green home renovation best practices. REGREEN can be downloaded free at www.thegreenhomeguide.org.

Should I use LEED for New Construction or LEED for Homes for my project?

For single-family, low-rise multifamily (up to 3 stories), custom, or production homes, LEED for Homes is required. Multifamily projects, especially those that are 4-6 stories, can use either or both. Projects seven stories or higher must register with LEED for New Construction.

What about affordable housing?

Affordable housing is also addressed by LEED for Homes. Funding from a generous grant from The Home Depot Foundation is available to help offset costs associated with LEED certification, including local rating and verification services. Contact a LEED for Homes Provider and visit www.greenhomeguide.org/affordable for more information.

I'm ready to register a project for LEED for Homes certification. What should I do?

Call (503) 477-8474. Earth Advantage Institute will be more than happy to get you started with the process. Earth Advantage Institute will connect you with the USGBC to register your project, help you set your goals, and then see them through to certification.